REMARKS

The Office Action dated December 16, 2005 has been received and carefully noted. The above amendments to the claims and the following remarks are submitted as a full and complete response to the Office Action.

Claims 1, 12 and 19 are amended to correct informalities and distinctly claim the subject matter of the invention. Entry of the amendments is respectfully requested because they place the application in condition for allowance and in better condition for appeal, do not contain new matter, and do not raise new issues that require further search and/or consideration. Claims 1-19 are respectfully submitted for consideration.

The Office Action objected to claims 1-18 because of informalities. Applicants submit that claims 1 and 12 are amended as suggested tin the Office Action. Accordingly, withdrawal of the objection of claims 1-18 is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph for not being enabled in the specification. Applicants respectfully submit that claim 19 as amended is fully enabled in the specification. Specifically claim 19 is amended to recite "send synchronization messages to the plurality of user terminals . . .". Further, this feature is clearly described in the specification at least on page 7 lines 30-33 of the specification.

Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 19 under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 5,956,037 to Osawa et al. (Osawa). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Claim 19 recites a server for managing recordings in a system capable of providing a plurality of user terminals with synchronized playback of the recordings via a communications network. The server is configured to send synchronization messages to the plurality of user terminals during playback of a recording, and monitor messages from the plurality of user terminals during playback. The server is further configured to generate a synchronization message for controlling the playback process in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least account information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of any of the pending claims.

Osawa is directed to a video information providing/receiving system in which manual operations such as fast forward, rewind, pause and slow play are saved in an operation history information file such that on subsequent playbacks of the video information, the user can select the saved operation history information such that the video information is played back with the same sequence of operations without the user having to manually select the operation. On subsequent playing of the video information with an operation history information file selected, a user can manually override the pre-

recorded operations if the manual operation priority flag is ON, while if the manual operation priority flag is OFF, then a user cannot override the pre-recorded operations.

Osawa further describes that with the aforementioned arrangement, when a teacher gives a particular lecture to a particular audience with the same educational video information that has been used for another audience, the teacher can play back the educational video information using the same method as previously used without performing the same operations that he or she performed before. A number of operation history information files can be stored such that subsequent play back to different audiences can emphasize different portions of the video information according to the audience.

In another embodiment, Osawa is directed to an arrangement in which video information is simultaneously transmitted to a plurality of user terminals. However, as shown in Figure 2 in which the video information is sent in real time to the user terminals and the video information editing unit, the operation history information file and the operation history extracting unit are located in the video information providing host. Osawa further describes that for one of the plurality of user interfaces receiving the video information, if a simultaneous transmission destination interrupt flag is ON, then a manual operation by the user overrides any pre-stored operation history information, the video information being edited in the video information providing host according to the received operations and subsequently sent to the plurality of user terminals. If the

simultaneous transmission destination interrupt flag is turned OFF for a user, then any manual operations will not override the pre-stored operation history information.

Applicants respectfully submit that Osawa fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature "generate a synchronization message for controlling the playback process in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least account information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, as recited in claim 19. Instead, Osawa merely discloses that if the manual operation flag is switched on, a user can override the pre-recorded operation history information.

Based at least on the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited reference fails to disclose or suggest all of the features of claim 19. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claims 1-2 and 4-11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Osawa in view of US Patent No. 5,808,662 to Kinney et al. (Kinney). The Office Action took the position that Osawa disclosed all of the features of these claims except of transmitting a status message to the terminals. The Office Action asserted that Kinney disclosed this feature. Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in any of the pending claims.

Claim 1, from which claims 2-11 depend, recites a method for providing synchronized service in a communications network including user terminals and servers providing services to the user terminals through at least one channel. The method

includes forming at least one group of user terminals having different rights to control a playback of a recording and allocating at least one channel to an individual group, and transmitting a recording to the user terminals of a group thus formed, each recording including timing markers, each of which indicates an internal position within the recording. The method further includes storing at least part of the recording prior to its playback at each user terminal. The method further includes sending a start command to each terminal of the group and in response to the start command, starting the playback of the recording at each user terminal. The method further includes maintaining status information for the recording, the status information indicating at least the playback position of the recording, transmitting a status message to the user terminals, the message indicating new status information concerning the recording. The method further includes changing the playback status at each user terminal according to said new status information, and controlling the playback in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority.

Osawa is discussed above. Kinney is directed to synchronized, interactive playback of digital movies across a network. Kinney discloses playing movie data in a substantially synchronized manner at each playback system according to playback control data requested by one of the participants. Further, Kinney discloses allowing a participant to join the viewing of a movie. In doing so, the participant sends a "hello event." A master ("the location that initiated the session or event") sends back a "seek event" which is required in order to advance the movie viewed by the participant at the

- 12 -

remote system to the frame that all other participants are currently viewing. See column 6 lines 55-65 and Figures 2A, 2B and 2C of Kinney.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest at least the feature of controlling the playback in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, as recited in claim 1. Instead at best, Osawa describes a synchronized service in a communication network including a plurality of user terminals when the service is provided in real-time. Therefore, the arrangement in Osawa does not allow for the synchronization of a service sent to and stored in a plurality of user terminals prior to playback. Even though Osawa does describe that information is buffered prior to playback, Osawa fails to disclose or suggest how to allow for the synchronization of service to a plurality of user equipment (i.e, storing at least part of the recording prior to its playback, sending a start command to each user terminal of the group and in response to the art command starting the playback of the recording at each terminal), as recited in claim 1.

Applicants respectfully submit that Kinney fails to cure the above deficiencies of Osawa because Kinney fails to disclose or suggest at least the feature of controlling the playback in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, as recited in claim 1.

- 13 -

Applicants respectfully submit that because claims 2 and 4-11 depend from claim 1, these claims are allowable at least for the same reasons as claim 1 and for the additional features recited in these dependent claims.

Based at least on the above, Applicants respectfully submit the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features recited in claims 1-2 and 4-11. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1-2 and 4-11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) is respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejected claims 3 and 12-18 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious over Osawa, in view of Kinney, in further view of US Patent No. 5,583,561 to Baker et al. (Baker). The Office Action took the position that Osawa and Kinney disclosed all of the features recited in these claims with the exception of forming several user groups. Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references taken individually or in combination, fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of any of the pending claims.

Osawa and Kinney are discussed above. Baker is directed to a multicast digital video data server using synchronization groups. Baker describes a system and method for distributing real-time, compressed, digital video data from a video library composed of mass storage devices through a digital video server to large numbers of viewers via distribution networks. In Baker, the server obtains selected frames of video data for viewer-requested programs from high-speed memory using a buffering strategy, replicates the data via a multi-cast technique for each viewer listed in an assigned

synchronization group and forwards the data to each viewer's site where it is decompressed, decoded, and converted for display on a monitor or computer display. Baker is relied upon in the Office Action to disclose the feature of forming several user groups.

Applicants respectfully submit that because claim 3 depends from claim 1 Osawa and Kinney are deficient at least for the same reasons discussed above, and Baker fails to cure these deficiencies. Specifically, Baker fails to disclose or suggest controlling the playback in the plurality of user equipment by utilizing at least information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority. Thus, Baker fails to cure the deficiencies of Osawa and Kinney.

Claims 12, from which claims 13-18 depend, recites a system for providing synchronized playback of recordings in a communications network with transmission channels. The system includes a server for managing recordings stored within the system, user terminals for storing and playing the recordings, and transmission means for transmitting the recordings to the user terminals through at least one channel. In the system, each recording includes timing markers (TM), each of which indicates an internal position within the recording. The system further includes first management means for maintaining information on user groups formed in the system, the information indicating the user terminal(s) belonging to each group, the channel(s) assigned to each group, and the recording(s) being used by the group, wherein each of the user terminals belonging to the group have different rights for controlling playback of a recording. The system

further includes second management means for maintaining status information for said recordings, the status information indicating at least the playback position of the recording, first control means for sending status information to the user terminals of a group, and second control means at each user terminal, responsive to the first control means, a second control means at each user terminal, responsive to the first control means, for controlling the playback in the user terminal according to said status information.

Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references fail to disclose or suggest the feature playback of the recording in the plurality of user equipment is controlled at least by utilizing information received in a message from a user terminal with highest priority, as recited in claim 12. Specifically, at best, Osawa describes a synchronized service in a communication network including a plurality of user terminals when the service is provided in real-time. Therefore, the arrangement in Osawa does not allow for the synchronization of a service sent to and stored in a plurality of user terminals prior to playback. Even though Osawa does describe that information is buffered prior to playback, Osawa fails to disclose or suggest how to allow for the synchronization of service to a plurality of user equipment. Further, Applicants submit that Kinney and Baker fails to cure the deficiencies of Osawa.

Applicants respectfully submit that because claims 13-18 depend from claim 12, these claims are allowable at least for the same reasons as claim 12 as well as the additional features recited in these dependent claims.
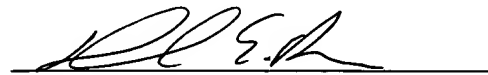
Further, regarding claim 18, the Applicants respectfully traverse the Office Notice taken in the Office Action that it is well-known in the art that terminals are terminals in a mobile network. Applicants respectfully request evidence that terminals are necessarily terminals in a mobile network as alleged in the Office Action.

Based at least on the above, Applicants respectfully submit that the cited references taken individually or in combination fail to disclose or suggest all of the features of claims 3 and 12-18. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection of claims 3, 12-18 is respectfully requested.

If for any reason the Examiner determines that the application is not now in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner contact, by telephone, the applicant's undersigned attorney at the indicated telephone number to arrange for an interview to expedite the disposition of this application.

In the event this paper is not being timely filed, the applicant respectfully petitions for an appropriate extension of time. Any fees for such an extension together with any additional fees may be charged to Counsel's Deposit Account 50-2222.

Respectfully submitted,

David E. Brown
Registration No. 51,091

Customer No. 32294
SQUIRE, SANDERS & DEMPSEY LLP
14TH Floor
8000 Towers Crescent Drive
Tysons Corner, Virginia 22182-2700
Telephone: 703-720-7800
Fax: 703-720-7802

DEB:jkm